

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1123

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: KS PINT

SUBJECT: BLUE HOUSE ANNOUNCES SLATE OF TWENTY-THREE NEW YUCHONGHOE
MEMBERS

REF: SEOUL 0885

1. ON MORNING OF FEBRUARY 14, BLUE HOUSE SPOKESMAN YIM PANG HYON ANNOUNCED NAMES OF TWENTY-THREE REPLACEMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN 73 STRONG YUCHONGHOE CONTINGENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. LIST WAS UNDRAMATIC. NO BIG NAMES WERE EITHER ADDED OR DROPPED FROM YUCHONGHOE WITH EXCEPTION OF KIM CHIN-MAN, VICE SPEAKER, WHO WAS NOT RETURNED. MOST NOTABLE ELEMENT IN ANNOUNCEMENT PERHAPS WAS THAT LIST HAD BEEN KEPT CONFIDENTIAL ALMOST UP TO MOMENT OF ANNOUNCEMENT.

2. AMONG MEMBERS FOR THIS THREE-YEAR TERM WHO WILL BE ADDED ON FEBRUARY 16 WHEN NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR UNIFICATION WILL VOTE YES OR NO TO PRESIDENT'S SLATE, WERE AT LEAST SIX MODERATE PROFESSORS, FOUR DIPLOMATS, SIX HEADS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS, TWO JOURNALISTS AND TWO FORMER MINISTERS. SEVERAL EX-GENERALS WERE ALSO IN EVIDENCE BOTH IN ABOVE CATEGORIES AND ELSEWHERE. SAEMAUL LEADERS WERE APPOINTED AS ALTERNATES AND NOT FULL MEMBERS AS SOME SPECULATION HAD INDICATED. NEW NOMINEES, IN
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GENERAL, APPEAR TO BE CAPABLE, REASONABLY WELL-KNOWN HERE AND

WELL-REGARDED, BUT NO REALLY MAJOR FIGURES LIKE FORMER KCIA HEAD YI HU-RAK OR EX-PRESIDENTIAL PROTECTIVE FORCE CHIEF PARK CHONG KYU WERE ADDED DESPITE ADVANCE RUMORS TO THIS EFFECT. FORMER PRIME MINISTER KIM CHONG-PIL WAS RETAINED. INCIDENTALLY, NONE OF EMBASSY'S PRINCIPAL CONTACTS WERE DROPPED. IN HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, SPOKESMAN EMPHASIZED NEW MEMBERSHIP WOULD WORK EFFICIENTLY TOWARD TOTAL UNITY AND YUSHIN GOALS AND ITS PROFESSIONAL CAST WOULD APPEAR TO EQUIP IT TO DO JUST THAT.

3. NAMES EXCISED FROM ASSEMBLY SEEMED TO BE LARGELY LESSER POLITICIANS, UNKNOWN AND MORE OR LESS INEFFECTIVE MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY IN THEIR ADVOCACY OF YUSHIN (REVITALIZING REFORM). THERE APPEARS TO BE A SLIGHT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN MEMBERS. THREE WERE CUT FROM LIST AND ONLY ONE ADDED.

4. LISTS OF NEW CANDIDATES AND THOSE TO BE REMOVED WERE CLEARLY HELD VERY CLOSELY AND MANY WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR CONTENTS IN ADVANCE WERE NOT INFORMED. ON DAY BEFORE ANNOUNCEMENT, PROMINENT YUCHONGHOE ASSEMBLYMAN TOLD DCM HE HAD NO INKLING AS TO HIS OWN STATUS AND DID NOT EXPECT TO BE INFORMED UNTIL LISTS WERE MADE PUBLIC. EVEN ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CHONG IL KWON WAS KEPT IN DARK UNTIL LAST MOMENT. BEFORE WEEKLY EARLY MORNING GOLF GAME ON DAY OF ANNOUNCEMENT, HE TOLD DCM THAT HE EXPECTED LISTS TO BE ANNOUNCED LATE IN DAY BUT DID NOT KNOW WHAT NAMES THEY WOULD CONTAIN. LATER, WHILE CHANGING CLOTHES IN LOCKER ROOM, CHONG LEAPT ACROSS ROOM WITH TROUSERS AROUND HIS KNEES TO RECEIVE NOTE CONTAINING PARTIAL LIST OF THOSE TO BE DROPPED FROM HIS JUNIOR SECRETARY. HE AND OTHER KOREANS PRESENT WERE CLEARLY SURPRISED BY NEWS VICE SPEAKER BEING DROPPED AND SUBSEQUENT BREAKFAST WAS EATEN IN LUGUBRIOUS ATMOSPHERE WITH MANY WHISPERED ASIDES. FOLLOWING BREAKFAST, DRP ASSEMBLYMAN MIN KI-SHIK SAID THAT CHONG HAD NOT YET BEEN INFORMED THAT TWO FORMER CLOSE ASSOCIATES WERE ALSO BEING DROPPED.
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